

**AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION:**

**Please amend the paragraph beginning at line 6 on page 16 as follows:**

It can be shown (e.g., referring to polarity theory literature, such as the text book titled Integer Programming and Combinatorial Optimization by Nemhauser and Wolsey (John Wiley and Sons, New York, ~~1988~~ 1988), the contents of which are incorporated herein by reference) that the polytope P (defined as a bounded polyhedron) shrinks "strictly" in Step 2 of each iteration in such a way that in each iteration a new optimal solution with a strictly better objective function value is generated. This monotonic behavior leads to the finite convergence of the above described Procedure *Global*, as shown in the iterative process shown in Figure 5.